UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1959
17 August 1995

THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* UNDP's Human Development Report 1995 shows women experience economic and social inequalities worldwide; estimates women contribute $11 trillion to global economy in unpaid and undervalued work.

* Croatian Government prevents UNHCR relief convoys from reaching 30,000 refugees from Bosnia's Bihac pocket; UNCRO reports extensive looting by Croatian forces in Sector South.

* Secretary-General to pay official visit to Portugal next week in connection with fiftieth anniversary of United Nations.

* Decolonization Committee adopts decision on military bases in Non-Self-Governing Territories; Russian Federation calls Committee's stance outmoded and archaic.

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The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) today launched its Human Development Report 1995. Published annually since 1990, the Report examines the progress made by people worldwide and provides country-by-country comparisons on a broad range of social and economic indicators. This year, it focuses on gender inequalities and includes two new composite indices -- the gender-related development index (GDI) and the gender empowerment measure (GEM).

Gender gaps in basic human capabilities have been halved in recent decades, but women still lack access to economic and political opportunities, according to the Report. Women work longer hours than men in almost every country, but most of their work is unpaid, unrecognized and undervalued. It is estimated that such work contributes $11 trillion to the global economy. The undervaluation of work not only undermines women's purchasing power, but reduces their social status and their right to own property and receive credit from financial institutions. As a result, most of the world's poor are women.

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The Report presents a five-point strategy to close the economic and social gaps between men and women. It recommends: implementation of a timetable to eliminate legal discrimination against women; changes in social and institutional norms to extend more choices to women and men in the workplace; a threshold of 30 per cent for female representation in parliaments; expanding programmes for education and reproductive health; and targeting national and international efforts to provide greater access to political and economic opportunities.

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The Croatian Government has been preventing United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) relief convoys from reaching up to 30,000 Bosnian refugees from the Bihac pocket. The refugees are supporters of rebel Muslim leader Fikret Abdic who fled to Croatia after the Bosnian Government took control of the pocket. They are living out of doors or in vehicles and their situation is deteriorating daily. It is thought that the Croatian Government wants to pressure the refugees to return to Bosnia, but many of them fought against the Bosnian Army and fear reprisals if they do so.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia (UNCRO) has been enjoying greater freedom of movement in Sector North. Peace-keepers have visited Serbs who stayed put after the Croatian Government's recent military action there. The Serbs were afraid, but were otherwise living in satisfactory conditions. In Sector South, UNCRO observed extensive looting and destruction of property by Croatian military and police authorities. The build-up of forces around Dubrovnik continued today and some artillery fire was heard across the border in Bosnia.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali will pay an official visit to Portugal next week, according to a United Nations spokesman. The Secretary-General is undertaking the visit in connection with the fiftieth anniversary of the Organization, and an observance in the Portuguese Parliament.

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Military bases and installations which are impeding implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples should be withdrawn, according to a decision adopted by the Special Committee on decolonization. It called on the administering Powers to continue to take all necessary measures not to involve Non-Self-Governing Territories in any offensive acts against, or interference in, other States. Adopted by 11 votes in favour to one against (Russian Federation), the decision was one of three proposals adopted by the Committee as it concluded its 1995 session.

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The Russian representative said the decision had no connection with current circumstances and cast doubt on the desire of the Special Committee to work for the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories. If actions continued to be based on an outmoded, archaic and confrontational stance, the Russian Federation would be forced to review the level of its participation in the Committee's work.

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